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## EPA takes over cleanup of Mahoning River site

By JOE LAVILOR Tribune Chronicle

WARREN -- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has taken over cleanup at the Mahoningside Generating Plant and will pay for its completion.

The city is trying to restore the Mahoning Avenue site — which housed a turn-of-the-century power plant that was demolished in 1999 — to make it attractive for economic development.

Kendall Moore, environmental specialist with the EPA's Chicago office, said the project has been designated a "Superfund Emergency Response" site, which means it will be cleaned up with federal money.

EPA officials are already at the site conducting tests and removing soil.

In April, the federal agency became involved because of the discovery of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a carcinogen. McCabe Engineering of Richfield discovered soil samples between 4,500 and 15,000 parts per million of PCBs during testing of underground soil in March. The EPA investigates any site that has 50 parts per million or more of PCBs.

While the agency had an advisory role through the summer, Moore said it decided to take over the project when it became apparent the city had run out of money. The city, through a series of state loans, grants and private donations, already had paid \$2.3 million for the cleanup. With Warren's poor financial condition -- 54 employees are laid off -- the city couldn't afford to keep the project going.

"We did not see it as a site that should remain idle for six months or longer," Moore said. "The proximity to the Mahoning River posed enough of a risk for us to go ahead and pay for the remainder of the project."

While it's unlikely that the site could have posed an environmental or health risk, Moore said it makes sense to remove the risk of PCBs migrating to the Mahoning River and infiltrating the environment.

Moore said he's not sure how much more money will be needed, because of uncertainty regarding what still could be found at the site.

Mark Durno, BPA's on-scene coordinator, said work began at the site last week, with contaminated soil being removed from underground pipes, sumps and conduits.

He said the soil is being shipped to a toxic waste landfill near Buffalo, where the contaminated materials can't escape.

Dumo said a new contractor has taken over the project — Environmental Quality Management of Cluchmati. Durno said McCabe is being retained as a subcontractor.

He said over the next menth or so, contractors will conduct more tests to gauge the extent of the problem. He said they will also likely perform a health risk analysis before deciding what to do with the soil.

Durno said depending on how the test results turn out, they could excavate or encapsulate the soil.

Ed McCabe, president of McCabe Engineering, said his company had been doing limited work — underground water treatment and pumping — until the federal EPA came aboard.

"We had a lot of hope that they would take over," McCabe said. "This is excellent news for the city of Warren, that the U.S. EPA took immediate steps to protect the environment and make sure the

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project is completed."

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